



# THIS WEEK IN IRAQ

The Newsletter of the Multi-National Force - Iraq

www.mnf-iraq.com

June 21, 2006

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## Heads of State...



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. James Sherrill

U.S. President George W. Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki participate in a video teleconference in Baghdad June 13.

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## Baghdad under top security

By Sara Wood  
American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON** — Iraqi security forces, with the assistance of the Coalition, launched Operation Together Forward, or Amaliya Ma'an ila Al-Amam, Wednesday, which is designed to lower violence in and around Baghdad. The combined Iraqi-Coalition security operations are enforcing emergency anti-terrorism and weapons-control laws. Coalition Soldiers in Baghdad are committed to helping Iraqi forces take control of their capital's security and curb violence in the city, the U.S. commander in the region said Friday.

"The security of Baghdad is about Iraqis," Army Maj. Gen. James D. Thurman, commander of Multi-National Division - Baghdad, said in a news conference.

"This is about the Iraqi government stepping forward and taking action to lower this violence. This is not about the

Coalition."

The operations are defeating and disrupting terrorist cells and capturing high-value targets, Thurman said.

"Since we've kicked this operation off, I've been out there every day, and what I've observed is a commitment from the Iraqi security forces on getting Baghdad in a more secure state," he said.

In Multi-National Division - Baghdad's area of responsibility, eight brigades and 23 battalions of the Iraqi Army are leading operations. In Baghdad province, Iraqi security forces operate in 80 percent of the area.

"These Iraqi formations independently plan and execute missions to drive down the violence and rid their nation of terrorist factions," the general said.

Thurman said citizens continue to join the police force and that the Ministry of Interior is working to man

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**GENERAL CASEY'S CORNER**

# Recent events lead to momentum in Iraq

By Gen. George W. Casey Jr.  
Multi-National Force - Iraq  
Commanding General

Last week gave us a series of events to help continue the irreversible momentum attained with the death of al-Qaida in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the completion of the Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's cabinet and the release of detainees across the country.

To show true commitment, the President of the United States George W. Bush made a surprise visit to Iraq to personally meet with Prime Minister al-Maliki and select members of the Iraqi leadership. During his short visit, the president reinforced the United States' support to Iraq and the prime minister's priorities: security, the economy, and increased international support.

The day following the president's visit, Prime Minister al-Maliki enacted Operation Together Forward, or Amaliya Ma'an ila Al-Amam. This comprehensive endeavor will consist of the implementation of emergency anti-terrorism and weapons control laws and focused combined security operations with Iraqi security forces. Amaliya Ma'an ila Al-Amam involves 48 battalions from Coalition and Iraqi security forces.

The issue of violence in Baghdad is extremely complex. While Zarqawi's death will hurt terrorist operations, al-Qaida still remains a threat. We continue to face other threats to security. With precise intelligence-driven operations, together with Iraqi forces, we will target the groups or cells that stand in opposition to a free and prosperous Iraq. Our combined operations with Iraqi security forces continue to defeat and disrupt terrorist cells and capture high-

value targets. Providing a secure environment is the foundation for the future of Iraq.

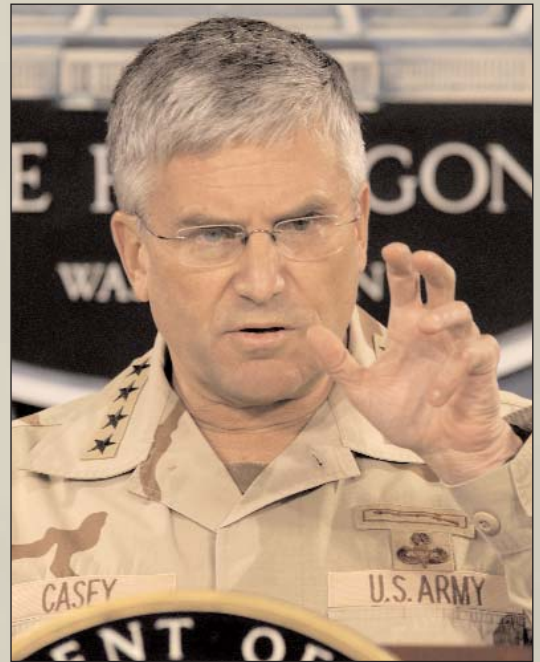
And with security comes prosperity. Several projects recently concluded, or nearing completion, as of early this month by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have dramatically improved the living conditions for everyday Iraqis and set the stage for future development. In the electricity sector, construction is complete on 1.86 miles of feeder lines and the installation of overhead distribution lines in Baghdad Province improving electrical services for more than 270,000 residents.

In the water sector, 52 water treatment units are installed in Karkh District of Baghdad Province. These water units will produce nearly 106,000 gallons of potable water per day, enough for approximately 78,000 residents.

The recent completion of a project to upgrade and improve the water quality and capacity at Wathba water treatment plant provides an additional 528,344 gallons of water per hour to Baghdad residents.

The greatest increase in water capacity for the Iraqis to date will occur when the Irbil water treatment plant is completed and brought on line in July. The project will provide an additional 1.6 million gallons of water per hour for more than 333,000 residents of Irbil and the surrounding communities.

In the facilities and transportation sector, there are 1,493 total projects of which 1,185 are complete, 231 in process, and 77 remain to be awarded. This sector builds and renovates health-care centers, schools, public buildings and roads and bridges. It also renovates hospitals, airports, and sea ports. Major ongoing projects include the



Baghdad Police College, prisons, hospitals, and health-care centers. Mission essential facilities and utilities at the Baghdad Police College are complete. This has allowed the cadets to move into the barracks and to continue training to become quality police officers. Work continues on nine remaining hospitals.

The installation of the Al-Qadisiya Sewage Pumping Station and 3.73 miles of sewer line will eventually provide sanitary sewer service and better health for 85,000 residents of Mahmoudiyda Village and Karadah District in the Baghdad Province. The first two of 142 health-care centers opened on May 25. These clinics are now providing care to patients in the Sadr City and Rusafa areas of Baghdad. Iraqi contractors are completing 15 additional health-care centers under GRD-awarded contracts. Four of these health-care centers are expected to be complete by the end of June.

These projects, and increased security around Iraq are the result of years of hard work in governance, rebuilding and security. They are starting to take shape and generating positive outcomes every day.

**"We will target the groups...  
that stand in opposition to a  
free and prosperous Iraq."**

**GENERAL CASEY'S CORNER**

# More 'low-risk' detainees released

Story and photo  
by Jim Garamone  
American Forces Press Service

**BAGHDAD** — The Iraqi deputy prime minister called on about 450 Iraqis being freed from the Abu Ghraib detention facility Thursday to work for peace in Iraq, the Middle East and the world.

Salim al-Zawbai spoke to the men before they were released from the facility. It is part of an Iraqi government effort to free more than 3,000 "low-risk" prisoners, he said.

"End the language of death and begin the language of life," Zawbai told the men. He said they should condemn those who would use religion to tear down religion and pit sects against sects.

"We need to protect the blood of all human beings, no matter where they are from, what they believe or their color," he said through a translator.

He called on the men to help rebuild Iraq and become part of the new government of Iraq. "We need everybody, because if only some participate, we have an unclear picture of the wants of the nation," he said.

Following their release, the detainees

shook the deputy prime minister's hand and trooped onto buses to take them back home.

The men are all categorized as "low-risk" detainees and this was the third release of several scheduled under the Iraqi government's special request.

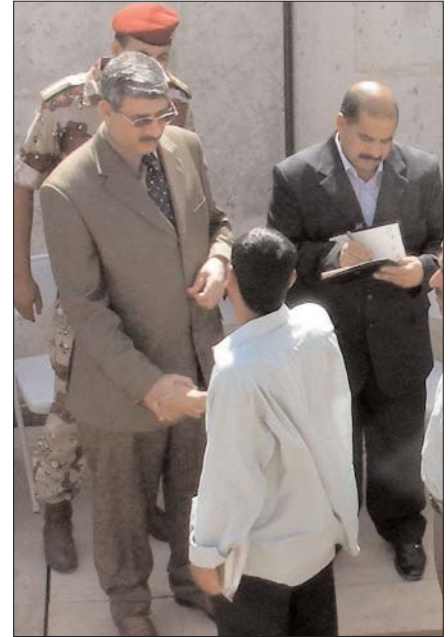
Each man received new clothes, a Koran, a prayer rug, a towel and \$25.

The recidivism rate for these detainees is "very low," said Army Lt. Col. Keir-Kevin Curry, spokesman for Task Force 134, which specializes in detainee operations. He said that no one "with blood on their hands" is part of the special release program.

The men had all been held between three months and 18 months, said Army Col. Bill Ivey, the task force's deputy commander. While being held, they received the same medical and dental care that American servicemembers receive.

Coalition detention operations will soon close down at Abu Ghraib and move to another facility now under construction.

This will place detainees into buildings and out of tents. "It's better for their quality of life and for security purposes," Ivey said.



**Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Salim al-Zawbai speaks with former detainees released from Iraq's Abu Ghraib detention facility on Thursday.**

es," Ivey said.

The releases are in addition to normal releases Coalition forces make. Last month, for example, Coalition forces released 1,300 detainees, Curry said.

## World Cup companions...

**Al Muthanna Task Group 3**  
Commander Lt. Col. Michael Mahy, center, with Soldiers from the Australian task group, was invited to watch the World Cup soccer match between Japan and Australia at Camp Samawah in southern Iraq on June 12.

The camp is the Japanese base of operations in Al Muthanna province.

Seated with Mahy are Japan Self Defense Force members based at Camp Samawah.

Australia's team won the match 3-1.

*Photo courtesy of Australian MOD*



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**Security** *from page 1*

all 262 police stations in and around Baghdad.

As the police work to achieve victories against terrorists, they gain more trust and confidence from the Iraqi people, he said.

As Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki completed his cabinet by naming ministers of interior and defense, he made security in Baghdad a top priority.

The general said Coalition officials are encouraged by al-Maliki's efforts to achieve common Iraqi and Coalition goals in Iraq.

"The government is now poised to take on the hard issues that are important to the Iraqi people," he said.

"We're openly optimistic and encouraged by the national unity government's efforts as it begins the challenging task of providing unity, security and prosperity to the Iraqi people."



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. David Hodge, 4th Inf. Div.

**Army Maj. Gen. James D. Thurman, commanding general of Multi-National Division - Baghdad, speaks with a store owner in Sadr City. Thurman asked the man about security concerns in the neighborhood.**

**Photo of the week**


**Running low on air, firefighters get their oxygen tanks replaced while fighting a fire that broke out in the early morning at Mjdat's restaurant in Mosul on June 8.**



## Hero of the Week

# Scout committed despite wounds



**Capt. Jon Bodenhamer, left, administers the oath of re-enlistment to Staff Sgt. Michell Caldwell, center, with his platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Sean Brack.**

Story and photo  
courtesy of  
4th Infantry Division

**FOB FALCON** — A Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldier re-enlisted from his hospital bed at the 10th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad June 13.

Staff Sgt. Michell Caldwell, a scout with the 4th Infantry Division, re-enlisted just hours after he was wounded in a gun battle in Hawh Rajab, a town in southern Baghdad.

His platoon was on patrol when it surprised a group of terrorists preparing to attack a nearby checkpoint. The Soldiers came under intense automatic weapons fire from both sides of a road - some from as close as 15 feet away.

Caldwell ordered his Soldiers to engage the insurgents.

During the battle, Caldwell was shot through both forearms but continued to

fight.

After the firefight he was evacuated to Forward Operating Base Falcon for emergency treatment.

Caldwell was then transported to the 10th CSH in Baghdad where Lt. Col. James Love, his battalion commander, and other members of his unit visited him.

"Sir, I was supposed to re-enlist today. I want to re-enlist before I leave," he said to Love.

The day before the patrol, he had asked a sergeant in his unit to schedule his re-enlistment ceremony to begin another six years of service.

Soldiers assigned to the 10th CSH helped Caldwell with the paperwork instead.

Sgt. 1st Class Jason Koutsalas, a 10th CSH career counselor, prepared the re-enlistment documents - his first for a

Soldier in the intensive care ward.

Doctors prepared Caldwell to be loaded on a stretcher for his trip to Germany for further treatment, while members of the platoon hung the American flag over Caldwell's bed and propped him up.

Caldwell was unable to raise his right arm due to multiple fractures. 1st Sgt. David Yost signed the paperwork on Caldwell's behalf.

Capt. Jon Bodenhamer, Caldwell's company commander, administered the oath of re-enlistment as the platoon stood at attention in the hospital ward.

Caldwell was later sent to Germany and then to the U.S. for surgery and rehabilitation.

"I am proud to have been able to make Staff Sgt. Caldwell's re-enlistment possible," said Koutsalas.

"It is all about taking care of Soldiers."

# Officials give details on al-Zarqawi strike

Story and photo by Sgt.  
Jeremy Pitcher  
Staff writer

Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV announced Thursday the aggressive actions taken by Coalition and Iraqi forces to keep the insurgency from regaining its footing after the loss of terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

The general commented on Coalition and Iraqi security forces' ongoing operations to destroy al-Qaida in Iraq.

He introduced Brig. Gen. Steve Hoog, Air Component Coordination Element Director of Multi-National Force - Iraq.

Hoog spoke about the timeline of the attack by an F-16 jet that killed al-Zarqawi.

At 6:11 p.m. June 7, the lead jet of two F-16s was directed by a ground commander to engage al-Zarqawi's safe house with a single precision-guided bomb.

After the initial bombing, the same jet was ordered to strike the

house with a second bomb.

Hoog said that the pilots were not aware that the terrorist leader was their target until hours after the strike.

Hoog added that on an average day Coalition aircraft conduct enough missions collectively to fly around the globe

4.5 times if they flew in a straight line. He also said that airborne tankers pump about 250,000 gallons of fuel each day. Transport aircraft fly about 150 missions, moving some 3,000 passengers and more than 1.1 million pounds of cargo per day.

"These are just some of the examples of airpower that give the Coalition the ability to rapidly reach any part of the battlespace."

## Continuing Momentum

Caldwell announced that DNA tests did match that of al-Zarqawi, providing more conclusive identification of the dead terrorist leader.

During the week, 452 operations were conducted at the company level and above. Of those, 255 were combined operations with Coalition forces and Iraqi security forces, and 143 were Iraqi security forces only, the general said.

The result was 759 insurgents detained and more than 100 killed, he said.



Air Force Brig. Gen. Steve Hoog speaks about precision weaponry used to kill Abu Musab al-Zarqawi during a press conference in Baghdad Thursday.

## F-16 Fighting Falcon



GUIDED BOMB UNIT (GBU) - 12

## Example AIRPOWER Available Supporting Iraqi Security



GUIDED BOMB UNIT (GBU) - 38

# U.S. troops: Iraqis get more info

Story and photo by  
Staff Sgt. Jim Goodwin  
Regimental Combat Team 7

**HIT** — Iraqi soldiers are leading daily patrols in the town of Hit, northwest of Ramadi, as they interact with locals and even catch a few bad guys.

When the U.S. Army arrived in the city earlier this year, daily patrols were conducted by mostly American troops and just a handful of Iraqi soldiers.

Iraqis now plan and execute their own missions while U.S. troops provide support.

Iraqi soldiers are also feeling the same frustrations as U.S. troops when interacting with the local community.

"Some people (are) different, some people will help and give information," said Sgt. Aihmed Ayeed Jabar, an Iraqi Soldier with the 7th Iraqi Army Division.

"Some of these guys know bad guys,

but won't say anything. They say they can't give information. They say, 'Bad guys know me, and will kill me.'"

The residents have not been very cooperative with U.S. Soldiers in giving up the names and locations of insurgents in the area, but U.S. troops said the heavy Iraqi military presence could change that.

**"They're more focused now. They're identifying things before they happen."**

Two weeks ago, an Iraqi-led patrol caught a man with artillery rounds.

The Iraqi soldiers noticed the man in a cemetery during a routine patrol with Americans from the Frieberg, Germany-based 36th Infantry Regiment.

The Iraqi troops suspected the man

was up to no good.

"We must have walked past, I don't know, thousands of people on that patrol," said Army 1st Sgt. David B. Sapp.

"They saw someone in that cemetery, questioned why he was there, and found out he had a bomb."

Iraqi patrols are resulting in about five captured insurgents per week, according to an Iraqi sergeant who recently led a patrol in the area.

"They're more focused now. They're identifying things before they happen," said Army Sgt. Mario Nelson, an infantryman tasked with training the Iraqi army unit.

"I think they'll do a much better job than we're doing now ... They get info we can't, and they're more versatile.

Besides, we want to show the IA (Iraqi army) is in charge, not Americans," he said.



An Iraqi soldier with the 7th Iraqi Army Division speaks with residents of Hit, a city of 30,000 in Al Anbar province, during a patrol June 11.

# Terrorists nabbed, weapons found

Story by Sgt. Kristopher Joseph  
Multi-National Corps - Iraq

## Killer sheik caught

Iraqi forces conducted an early morning raid in Karbala on June 15 and captured a high-ranking terrorist network commander without firing a shot.

Iraqi Soldiers, assisted by Coalition advisers, captured Sheik Aqeel. The sheik commanded a Karbala terrorist network and was wanted for killing Iraqi citizens and ordering attacks against Iraqi and Coalition forces. The terrorist network commander provided financial support to subordinate leaders and supplied them with improvised explosive devices.

Aqeel is also linked to a 2005 attack on the al-Mukhayim Iraqi Police station and the killing of Iraqi intelligence officers in Karbala.

The IEDs supplied by Aqeel are linked to the deaths of at least six Coalition Soldiers in 2005 and the deaths of a Coalition Soldier and an interpreter on June 8.

Iraqi forces captured another terrorist during the raid and seized a large weapons cache.

## Another one down

Police from the Iraqi Emergency Services Unit conducted a cordon and search for a known terrorist in Kirkuk June 11.

Soldiers from the 327th Infantry Regiment provided support as Iraqi Police moved into the home of a leader of an assassination cell working near Kirkuk.

Iraqi Police found the terrorist inside and detained him.

A search of the house revealed a briefcase containing passports and identification cards.

The terrorist was moved to the U.S. military compound in Kirkuk for further questioning.

Responsibility for security in most of Kirkuk was returned to Iraqi security forces early last month.

## Not that kind of school



Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Samuel C. Peterson

**While covering their movements with smoke, a Soldier attached to the I Marine Expeditionary Force signals a Marine to cross a street during a fire-fight with insurgents in Ramadi June 15.**

Coalition forces killed a terrorist and detained 23 others on June 12 during morning raids north of Ramadi.

The forces targeted terrorists using an elementary school for an IED and suicide bomber training facility. Several of the detainees were identified

**“The forces targeted terrorists using an elementary school for an IED and suicide bomber training facility.”**

as terrorists by local Iraqis.

Coalition forces secured several buildings during the raids and located weapons in each building. The weapons were destroyed on site.

Civilians were present during the raids, but none were injured and were returned to their homes when the buildings were secure.

## The great escape

Coalition forces in east Baghdad conducting curfew enforcement, stopped two vehicles June 13 and

seven Iraqi citizens jumped out claiming to have been kidnapped.

Soldiers from Multi-National Division - Baghdad were conducting curfew enforcement at approximately 11 p.m. when they spotted two vehicles carrying the suspected kidnappers and their victims.

During a search of the suspects Soldiers discovered three pistols.

The Soldiers detained four suspects and took the seven victims to a nearby forward operating base.

## Baqouba raid

Coalition forces killed seven, wounded three and detained two terrorists during a raid in the vicinity of Baqouba on June 12.

The terrorists were linked to senior al-Qaida leaders across Iraq. They are also suspected of working with foreign terrorists in the area.

Coalition forces received enemy machine gun fire from a roof upon arriving at the scene. Two individuals with rifles were seen fleeing the area.

Coalition aircraft supporting ground

## Operations

from previous page

forces engaged the enemy gunners, killing the seven.

The three wounded terrorists were evacuated to a nearby military medical center.

Coalition forces also found a grenade launcher, rockets, rifles and ammunition magazines.

### Boys hurt by IED

U.S. Marines and Iraqi Soldiers operating in western Al Anbar province evacuated two Iraqi boys wounded by an IED on June 9.

The Marines were manning a traffic control point when the boys' uncle approached them and requested medical assistance.

The man said the boys were tending sheep when the IED exploded.

Iraqi Soldiers and U.S. Marines rendered first aid and coordinated the evacuation of the boys to a nearby U.S. military medical

facility.

The boys were stabilized by U.S. medical staff and transported to a U.S. military hospital in Balad for further medical treatment.

### Weapons off the street

Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division and members of the Iraqi security forces discovered three weapons caches near Kirkuk on June 7.

Soldiers received a report from Iraqi Police in the village of Laylan that three men were hiding a mortar tube on the side of a road. The police secured the mortar tube and four mortars until a demolition team disposed of them.

The men stashing the weapons escaped before police arrived.

Two bags filled with rockets were also discovered southwest of Kirkuk after a citizen provided information to the Iraqi Army.

The third cache, mortar rounds and an artillery round, was discovered northwest of the city.



Operations Review

## Bush talks security in Iraq

By Kathleen T. Rhem  
American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON** — President Bush said Tuesday he was inspired to "visit the capital of a free and democratic Iraq" and spoke of his regard for new Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

Bush flew to Baghdad for a surprise visit with Maliki his Cabinet and with U.S. troops serving there.

"It was a pleasure to meet face to face with the prime minister," Bush said in a White House Rose Garden news conference. "I thought it important to sit down with him and talk to him in person. I saw firsthand the strength of his character and his deep determination to succeed, to build a country that can sustain itself, govern itself and defend itself."

Bush, Maliki and members of the Iraqi Cabinet met via video teleconference with members of Bush's Cabinet at Camp David, Md. Maliki briefed Bush on military operations in Iraq and laid out his three-pronged plan to bring peace and stability to Iraq. In his news conference Wednesday, Bush described Maliki's approach to improve Iraqi

security and the economy and to secure international support for Iraq's government.

"We discussed ways that my administration can help the prime minister accomplish these objectives," Bush said. "The policy of the United States government is to stand with this new government and help them succeed, and we will do what it takes to help them succeed."

Iraqi security forces, in conjunction with Coalition troops, today launched Operation Together Forward in and around Baghdad. Bush described the operation as "a joint effort to restore security and rule of law to high-risk areas in the capital city."

"It will be carried out by some 26,000 Iraqi Soldiers, some 23,000 Iraqi Police, backed up by more than 7,200 Coalition forces," Bush said. "Iraqi troops will increase the number of checkpoints, enforce a curfew and implement a strict weapons ban across the Iraqi capital," he said.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. James Sherrill

**U.S. President George W. Bush walks with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki outside of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad June 13.**

# Justice building opens in Iraq

Story and photo  
courtesy of British MOD

**AL MUTHANNA** — Iraq has taken another step forward with the opening of Al Muthanna's new justice building in southern Iraq June 5.

It is the first provincial justice building to open in the country.

A ceremony was attended by the local governor and visiting representatives from the Ministry of Justice in Baghdad.

Al Muthanna's new justice building was officially opened by the commander of Task Force Muthanna, British Col. Giles Vosper-Brown.

The design and construc-

tion took more than 18 months and was overseen by the British Civil Military Cooperation Team as part of their governance capacity building program.

The building provides offices for departments within the Ministry of Justice, improving the ministry's ability to cope with economic expansion. It also enables community issues to be addressed efficiently.

Vosper-Brown congratulated the people of Al Muthanna on their new building.

"The Multi-National Forces are very glad to have been able to help the governor and the people of Al Muthanna province," he said.



The first provincial justice building in Iraq is open in Al Muthanna in southern Iraq.

## In my sights...



DoD photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Larson

Spec. Lance Rollason of the 66th Armored Regiment performs perimeter security during a raid in Husiniyah on June 11.

Multi-National Force Iraq Official Web Site Microsoft Internet Explorer

**WWW.MNF-IRAQ.COM FREEDOM FACT**

In March, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed construction of the \$118 million new power generation plant in Basra province. The new plant will provide power to about 1.5 million residents.

Home The New Iraq Search

Last Page: Monday, June 19, 2006 1:00 PM

# Rebuilding Iraq

## Arbil Province

The completion of a fire station will provide 20,000 residents with increased fire protection.



Projects that are shaping a nation

## Baghdad Province

### *Sanitation/Water*

The completed water line and water treatment unit in Abu Ghraib and Aqurquf will provide clean water to the residents of Zeljalba, Kwainat and Sumailat villages.

### *Public Buildings*

The renovation of the Ahmed Bin Hanabal School, the Hye Mezzera School, and the 14 July Primary School in North Babil will provide a better learning environment for 1,100 students.

The completion of the Al Yousifiya Local Council Building in North Babil will provide a fully functional local council.

The renovation of Al Thalith Public Health Clinic in Sadr will provide residents with better health.

The renovation of Al Swedia school in Rashid provides a better learning environment for about 1,000 students.

## Ninawa Province

About 20,000 citizens will have clean water with the installation of eight wells.

## Anbar Province

The completion of six border forts will increase the security along the border with Saudi Arabia.



# Soldier hands off stack of terror cash



**Spc. John Larkin, left, receives a unit coin from Lt. Col. Thomas Fisher. Larkin was recognized for his honesty after finding more than \$55,000 in cash and promptly turning it in to his chain of command.**

Story and photo by Lee Elder  
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

A Soldier who accidentally uncovered more than \$55,000 in cash at the site where terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi met his death said he never considered keeping the haul for himself.

Spc. John Larkin of the 101st Airborne Division quickly turned the money over to his platoon leader.

After opening the tape-bound envelope, they found Euro notes worth about \$55,000.

Three days after U.S. air strikes destroyed the safe house where Zarqawi was hiding, Larkin was with Soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Band of Brothers, who provided security for engineers cleaning up in the aftermath of the blasts. He saw a bulldozer turn up an object.

"As the bulldozer was moving dirt back and forth, I went to see this brick," Larkin said. "I was going to pick it up, but I found out it wasn't a brick.

It was a wad of money, six or seven inches thick, wrapped in cardboard and taped up.

Larkin and Pfc. Jacob Ponce called their platoon leader, 1st Lt. James Hester. Larkin said it never occurred to him to keep the cash or split it with Ponce.

"I'm trying to be honest," Larkin said. "I want to keep my nose clean, get this tour over and go back to the states."

He is a 13-year Army veteran who repairs communication equipment.

"I came running over and Larkin was waving this white stack saying, 'I got money,'" Hester said.

Hester said he immediately placed a guard on the envelope. It had a piece of shrapnel lodged in the middle of it.

Initially, the Soldiers said they had no idea how much money they uncovered. All they saw were the "50" digits on the Euros, which were still sealed.

Upon returning to Forward Operating Base Warhorse, they unwrapped the money.

"We cracked the seal and we started

counting it," Hester said.

"That's when it hit us how much it was."

Hester praised Larkin and Ponce for their honesty.

"Anybody could have just grabbed it, put in their pocket and be done with it," Hester said. "It shows quite a bit of integrity from the Soldiers that I have and the kind of people they are.

"It's more money than these two combined make in a year and some change, so they could pretty much split a year's salary in about five minutes."

Hester wasn't the only officer showing his appreciation. Larkin and Ponce were congratulated by Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Thomas Fisher. Fisher presented Larkin with a battalion coin.

"Spc. Larkin demonstrates the highest form of ... moral character that is the epitome of the American fighting man," Fisher said.

"What his action demonstrates is the exact reason why we continue to experience success here in Iraq."